



Nathan Deal
GOVERNOR



Georgia Student Finance Commission
Georgia Student Finance Authority
Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation
GAcollege411

Timothy A. Connell
PRESIDENT

June 1, 2011

Re: Students Impacted by Natural Disaster in Japan

Dear Colleagues,

Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) has received several inquiries from institutions that had students participating in study-abroad programs in Japan earlier this spring when the natural disaster struck. Institutions have inquired about a HOPE-recipient's requirement to repay HOPE funds if the student was required to withdraw from the term as a result of being required to evacuate Japan and about how to treat hours taken during this Spring term for students that were required to withdraw from the term or for whom a transcript is unavailable.

If a student was receiving the HOPE Scholarship during the spring of 2011, was participating in a study-abroad program in Japan, and was required by his or her institution to withdraw from the term, the student should not have his or her HOPE eligibility negatively impacted. Post-secondary institutions should return the full amount of the HOPE Scholarship award, excluding any book allowance funds, to GSFC. Upon the full refund to GSFC, the hours will be removed from the student's Paid Hours record, and the hours will not be counted as attempted hours.

Similarly, if a transcript is unavailable due to the disaster for a student who previously attended a post-secondary institution in Japan, the student should complete and submit to your office the enclosed certification form. With the certification form signed and on file in your office, you may proceed with a student's eligibility determination without that transcript.

If you have further questions about how to treat students that may have been impacted by the disasters in Japan, please contact Caylee French, Director of Student Aid Services, via email at cayleef@gsfc.org.

Sincerely,

Timothy A. Connell

TAC/cf



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Student Self-Certification

I, _____ (print name), certify that I was admitted to or enrolled in an academic program leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential at _____ (print name of Institution) but that a transcript of my enrollment and coursework is currently unavailable due to a natural disaster.

I also certify that I have reviewed the applicable State of Georgia Scholarship and Grant Program regulations and that I am eligible to receive the following Scholarships or Grants:

I understand that I am giving this certification because information to verify my eligibility is currently unavailable and I agree to provide any required information or documentation should it become available at a later date. Further, I acknowledge and agree that I have reviewed and agree to abide by the applicable scholarship or grant program rules and regulations. I understand that the applicable scholarship or grant program regulations may contain certain specific eligibility requirements, including procedures to calculate grade point average and determine residency. I also certify that this information is true, correct, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge and that the Georgia Student Finance Authority, Georgia Student Finance Commission, and/or the Georgia post-secondary educational institution in which I have enrolled may verify and/or review my eligibility for the scholarship or grant that I receive and that I may be required to repay any funds given to me if it is later determined that I was ineligible to receive them.

I authorize the release and exchange of information between the Georgia Student Finance Authority, the Georgia Student Finance Commission, educational institutions, and state agencies, and agree that such information exchanged may include financial, enrollment, academic status, identification, legal residency, and location information necessary to assure proper administration of the applicable scholarship or grant program. I understand that any willfully false statements made herein may result in prosecution for violation of Georgia Laws 1978, pp 1249, 1310, which states that false swearing shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for not less than one or more than five years or both.

Signature

Social Security Number

Date

This form should be signed in duplicate. One copy should be retained by the post-secondary institution and one given to the student.